

A. Claim 33

Applicant submits that claim 33 is patentable over the cited reference. Claim 33 recites that a second sheet feeder is adapted to be detachably attached to an upstream end portion of a first sheet feeder relative to the first direction.

The Examiner continues to maintain that shaft 10 of Ikeda discloses the claimed second sheet feeder. However, shaft 10 is fitted into the grooves 11 formed on the guide plates 8. As shown in at least Figure 2 of Ikeda, the grooves 11 are not situated at the upstream end portion of the sheet feeding tray 1 (alleged first sheet feeder). Rather, the grooves 11 are situated at a middle portion of the sheet feeding tray 1, such that the shaft 10 is attachable to the sheet feeding tray 1 at the middle portion. Accordingly, Applicant submits that claim 33 is patentable over the cited reference.

B. Claims 34, 37 and 38

Since claims 34, 37 and 38 are dependent upon claim 33, Applicant submits that such claims are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency.

C. Claims 41 and 42

Since claims 41 and 42 contain features that are analogous to the features recited in claim 33, Applicant submits that such claims are patentable for at least analogous reasons as set forth above.